Talleyrand offered as a basis for negotiation all that England could desire, including the restitution of Hanover and the principle of uti possidetis, which meant that England could keep Malta with the conquered colonies; besides, the Naples Bourbons, though banished from the mainland, could reign in the island of Sicily. But the French minister stipulated, apparently for France, that Russia should not treat in common with Great Britain. With these seemingly favorable terms Yarmouth set out for London. In reality negotiations with Russia had already been opened, and it was Alexander's express injunction through Oubril, the special plenipotentiary sent to Paris for the purpose, that Russia should not join England in negotiation. The Czar was unwilling to hamper himself in the Orient by even a temporary alliance with Great Britain, his rival in that quarter. This was playing directly into the hands of Napoleon, whose diplomacy was, like his strategy, dependent for its overwhelming success on the utter surprises it prepared for his opponents. Such a one was now in readiness. No sooner had Yarmouth returned to Paris in June than the French government began to draw back. King Joseph could not get on without Sicily, and the only possible indemnity to the former rulers would be a domain formed from the Hanseatic cities. After a few weeks of such fencing, during which Yarmouth appeared to mirror by a yielding complacency the supposed peace policy of Fox's cabinet, Oubril provisionally signed just such a treaty with Russia as Napoleon desired. Then first the bolt thus far kept in concealment was loosed by publishing as an accomplished fact the organization of a great power subsidiary to France in the heart of Europe — the Confederation of the Rhine. This was the most audacious of all Napoleon's audacious schemes.